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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[¶1.](#) Mideast

[¶2.](#) Iran

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported that yesterday PM Ehud Olmert tendered his resignation to President Shimon Peres. Ha'aretz reported that in private conversations yesterday, FM Tzipi Livni said that if Labor

Party leader Ehud Barak agrees to join a government under her leadership, he will be made a "full partner." Maariv reported that Barak demanded that Livni commit herself to a two-year partnership -- until the 2010 elections. Other media reported on the good atmosphere during the meeting between them. Peres is expected to formally entrust Livni tonight with forming a government, after he consults with the heads of the Knesset's 13 factions. However, only 38 Knesset members (29 from Kadima, 5 from Meretz, and 4 from Gil - the Pensioners' Party) have so far recommended to Peres that Livni form a government. The media cited Likud's efforts to bring about earlier general elections.

Major media reported that Brig. Gen. Yossi Baidatz, the head of IDF Intelligence's research department, told the cabinet on Sunday that "Iran is developing a command of uranium-enrichment technology and is galloping toward a nuclear bomb." He was quoted as saying that there is an increasing gap between Iran's progress in developing the bomb and the global pressure to halt that progress, and added that Israel's assessment that the Islamic Republic is focusing on improving uranium enrichment is consistent with the latest IAEA report on the matter. Baidatz was also quoted as saying that Hamas was not rushing into a deal for the release of captive soldier Gilad Shalit: "There is obstinacy in Hamas regarding the Shalit matter, and they see him as an asset whose value just rises."

Ha'aretz and other media reported that Kadima Party members who supported Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz's failed bid for the party leadership have legal challenges to last week's primary. However, Israel Hayom said that yesterday Judge Dan Arbel, the Chairman of Kadima's Elections Committee, accused Mofaz of presenting false claims of irregularities at the ballot box. Arbel added that Mofaz's people were responsible for most irregularities. Media reported that Mofaz could again join political life. The Jerusalem Post cited a lack of interest by Likud members in Mofaz's return.

Leading media quoted former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon as saying yesterday that Israel will not be able to avoid a military confrontation with Iran. He called on the international community to stand up to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as it did against Nazi Germany. Speaking at a military parade yesterday, Ahmadinejad said that the sanctions have not worked. "Iran is not in a position to show even the smallest flexibility against the bullying of the enemies. Those who wish ill for Iran will gain nothing but regret," he was quoted as saying. "The enemies of humanity ... had imagined that by military attack, and economic and scientific sanctions, they could break down our revolution and our nation." Maariv cited the fear of the defense establishment that Hizbullah could avenge the death of its top operative Imad Mugniyah during the interim government in Israel.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as saying in an interview with The Wall Street Journal: "Israel's continued settlement expansion and land confiscation in the West Bank makes physical separation of our two peoples increasingly impossible." Yesterday Ha'aretz reported that in the interview Abbas reiterated his support for a two-state solution. The Jerusalem Post cited other expressions of support for a binational state by Palestinian leaders.

Leading media reported that Palestinian sources accused Border Police officers of causing the death of a 60-year-old Palestinian woman by shoving her during a raid in the West Bank town of Abu Dis yesterday -- a charge the IDF vehemently denied.

Electronic media reported that yesterday the Jerusalem District Court sentenced Majdi Rahima Rimawi to life and an extra 80 years in jail. Rimawi was convicted of dispatching the murderers of tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi in February 202.

Yesterday leading media reported that on Friday Mahmoud Zahar, a Hamas leader in Gaza, accused Israel of renegeing on offers made in the negotiations for the return of Gilad Shalit. Major media reported that yesterday hundreds of Israelis and British Jews rallied in London to show solidarity with Shalit. Gilad's parents

attended the event. Leading media reported that last week Hollywood celebrities attended an event at Paramount Studios, entitled From

Vision to Reality, that celebrated the 60th anniversary of Israel.

Maariv reported that Iraqi MP Mithal Al-Aloussi eventually received an enthusiastic welcome in Baghdad following his return from Israel.

Yediot reported that the Waqf in Jerusalem forced a Muslim government minister from the Ivory Coast, who wanted to pray on the Temple Mount, to recite the Koran to prove that he is a Muslim.

Maariv reported that Maj. Gen. (res.) Oren Shahor, former coordinator of government activities in the territories, is joining the race for the post of Tel Aviv mayor.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Arnold Eisen, the chancellor of the (Conservative) Jewish Theological Seminary in Manhattan, told the newspaper that Zionism needs to do more to integrate Israeli Arabs into the Jewish state.

Maariv reported on the complaint of an Egyptian father whose son, who is ill with cystic fibrosis, cannot receive a drug because it is made in Israel. The father wrote a letter about his predicament to the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that on Sunday shares on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange posted their biggest gains in more than four years in joining the rally on world markets following the announcement of plans by the U.S.G. to bolster banks and restore stability to the financial system.

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**II. Mideast:**  
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Summary:  
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Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The question now is no longer whether Livni is capable of making ... decisions [on regional affairs] -- she has no choice. The real question is whether she will adopt a policy that Olmert has already decided for her, or if she will suddenly prove herself to be a real leader, the kind not afraid of innovations."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "[Olmert] wraps up his tenure with Israel no closer to peace, on any front, than it was prior to his taking office. His greatest failure, though, is what now seems like a chain of alleged crimes."

Political and parties columnist Sima Kadmon wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Barak currently is the dominant figure preventing the establishment of a Livni-led coalition."

Political commentator Shalom Yerushalmi wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Everything now hinges on Barak's whims, and it is highly doubtful that even he knows what he truly wants.... even if [Livni] finally does form a coalition government, the general feeling is that it will be built on splinter interests and not on an enthusiastic partnership or, heaven forbid, envisioned goals."

Block Quotes:  
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**II. "Will She Be a Real Leader?"**

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (9/21): "Olmert is leaving Livni a very crowded desk that does not allow her to set priorities. Everything is urgent.... If Mubarak succeeds in reconciling Hamas and Fatah, and a national unity government is formed in the PA, Israel will have to decide whether to cooperate with such a government even if it includes Hamas.... Israel needs to present the new U.S. president with a road map of its own for negotiations with Syria, and not wait for months until his advisers are appointed and a policy formulated on Israel.... Those who read the International

Atomic Energy Agency chairman's reports on his efforts in Iran can and should assume that Iran will obtain nuclear weapons.... The question now is no longer whether Livni is capable of making such decisions -- she has no choice. The real question is whether she will adopt a policy that Olmert has already decided for her, or if she will suddenly prove herself to be a real leader, the kind not afraid of innovations."

## II. "Olmert's Term"

Ha'aretz editorialized (9/22): "The biggest disappointment [of Olmert's term] lies in the diplomatic and security realm.... The Prime Minister clung to his chair and refused to acknowledge his responsibility for the failures, even after the resignations of Peretz and IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz. On the Palestinian front, the government's talks with Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) were hesitant and futile. Despite Olmert's proclamations of progress toward a 'shelf agreement,' it soon became clear that this, too, was a case of empty words, nothing more. In the Gaza Strip, on the other hand, Olmert was forced to accept a truce with Hamas on controversial terms. Even on the Syrian track, where there are some signs of progress, Olmert struggled to advance the talks to the negotiation stage.... He wraps up his tenure with Israel no closer to peace, on any front, than it was prior to his taking office. His greatest failure, though, is what now seems like a chain of alleged crimes, and it is these that brought his term to an early end."

## III. "Look Who's Talking"

Political parties columnist Sima Kadmon wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/22): "Known Barakologists, who have spent a good number of hours with the enigma known as Ehud Barak, are convinced that he is looking for a way not to sit in the same government with Livni. He simply holds her in low esteem, they explain. It is hard for him to reconcile himself to the fact that a woman who in his opinion is no smarter than he, no more of an intellectual than he, who hasn't done more than he has in her life -- should be his superior. If that is the case and a lack of esteem for the new Kadima chairperson is what is motivating him, why didn't Barak opt immediately to act for early elections? What was the purpose of all those statements about governmental stability? Others suggest that Barak, like always, doesn't know what he wants, and that he simply is buying time. Either way, Barak currently is the dominant figure preventing the establishment of a Livni-led coalition.... The Labor Party had better hope that Barak doesn't push himself once again into a position he should have eschewed: Instead of letting Shas do the dirty work for him and letting them be the ones to sabotage a Livni-led coalition government, it will be the Labor Party that is going to drag Israel to general elections. And instead of being a central partner in a left wing government, the Labor Party is going to work to find a way to be a partner in a right wing government headed by Netanyahu."

## IV. "Livni's Accidents"

Political commentator Shalom Yerushalmi wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (9/22): "Barak isn't a magician, and that's why he has invented all sorts of hopeless alternatives, ranging from an emergency government with Netanyahu to a change in legislation that would permit the Labor Party to recommend him as prime minister. All of those are delusions. Last night at their meeting, Barak apparently asked Livni to commit to a long-term partnership and governmental stability. He doesn't really want general elections, as noted. Everything now hinges on Barak's whims, and it is highly doubtful that even he knows what he truly wants. In general, Livni is beginning to feel the heat of political game-playing. Even if she emerges in one piece from all of these road accidents, the road ahead remains hazardous. Only Kadima, Meretz, and a splinter of the Pensioners Party have recommended to President Shimon Peres that Livni should form the next coalition government. Shas and the Labor Party recommended Olmert in 2006, because his victory was clearer. This time they've taken different directions. And even if she finally does form a coalition government, the general feeling is that it will be built on splinter interests and not on an enthusiastic partnership or, heaven forbid, envisioned goals."

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2. Iran:  
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Summary:  
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Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (9/22): "While the Iranian nuclear threat may have created an exceptional spirit of political consensus in Israel, that certainly hasn't been the case in the U.S."

Block Quotes:  
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"How Partisan Politics Is Dirtying the U.S. Consensus on Tehran"

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (9/22): "While the Iranian nuclear threat may have created an exceptional spirit of political consensus in Israel, that certainly hasn't been the case in the U.S. The debate over American policy toward Teheran has become just another polarizing issue in the U.S. presidential campaign. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that whatever real basis exists for consensus between Republicans and Democrats on the subject has for now been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency, as both sides largely use it as another piece of ammunition in the dirty campaign war.... It is instructive, though, to compare this matter with how Washington is dealing with the current Wall Street meltdown. In addressing the collapse of the financial markets, we see how Democrats and Republicans can still work together in a constructive fashion when they perceive a genuine pressing crisis is at hand. That this isn't the case with the Iran issue is a sign that the majority of Americans, and their political representatives, still don't perceive Tehran's nuclear ambitions as being anywhere near as much as a threat to the well-being of the U.S. as is the economic crisis."

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